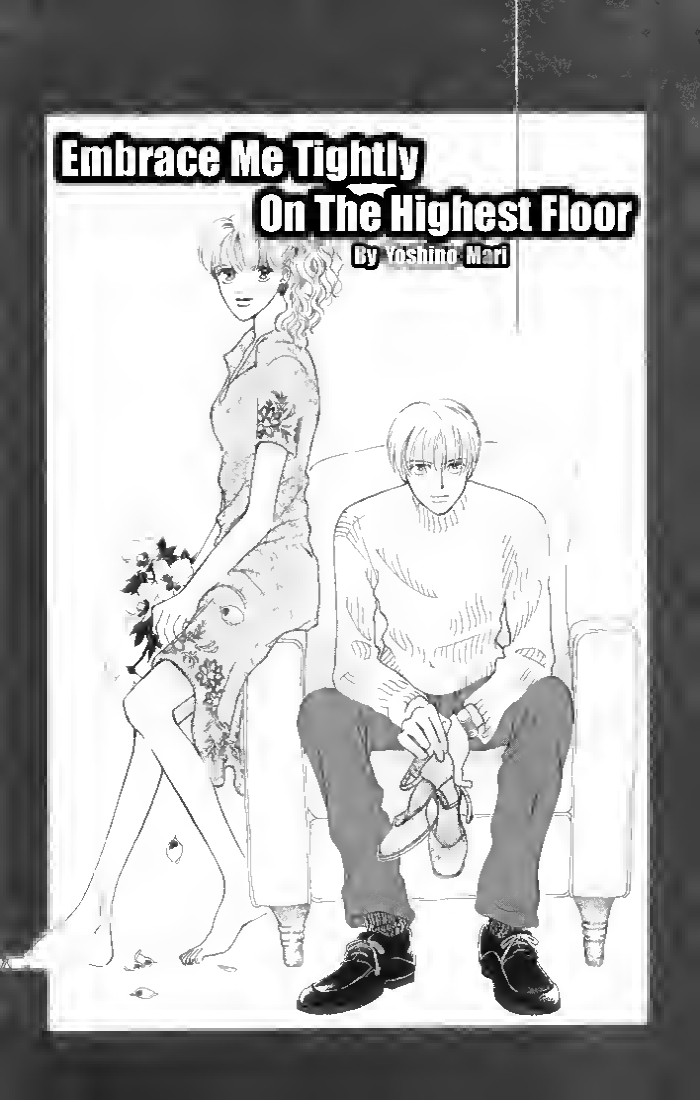
Embrace Me Tightly On The Highest Floor

By Yoshino Mari



LATELY, I KEEP HAVING THE SAME WEIRD DREAM.

EVEN THOUGH I'M TRYING MY HARDEST TO CLIMB UP THE STEPS...

BEFORE I KNOW IT, RICHI—WHO WAS CLIMBING BEHIND ME—IS AHEAD OF ME.

AND I'VE BEEN TURNED INTO A STATUE, UNABLE TO MOVE.

THEN RICHI TURNS AROUND AND SAYS, "I DON'T CARE IF RUYOU ISN'T AROUND ANYMORE."

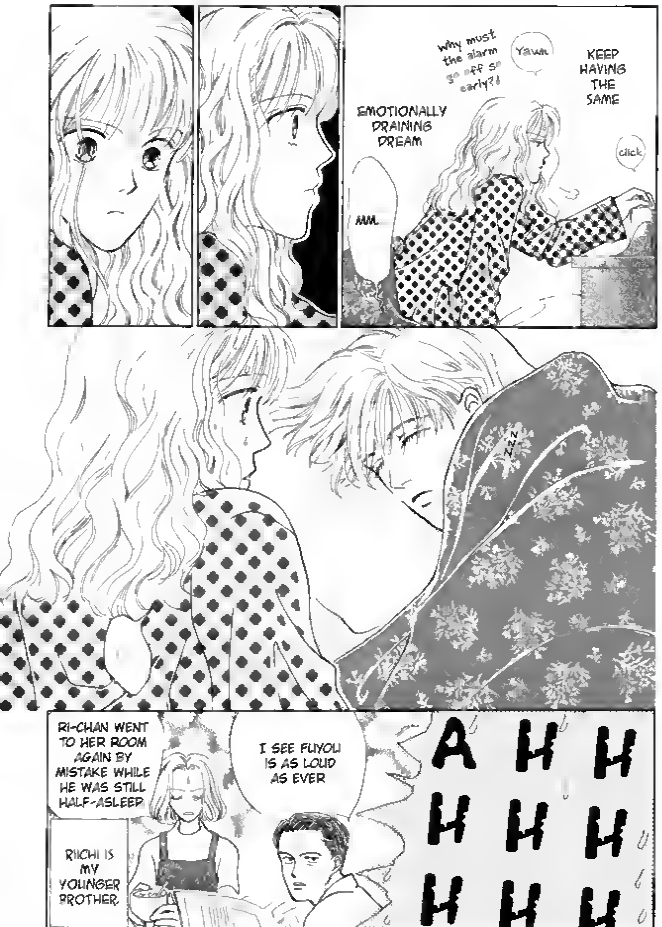
AND HEADS FOR THE TOP FLOOR AT FULL SPEED

I...

...

bang

bang

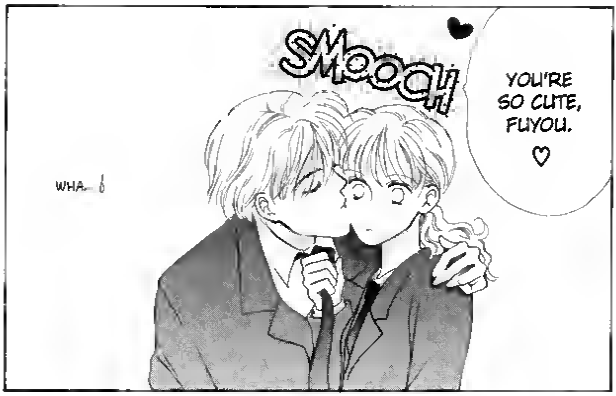

EMOTIONALLY DRAINING DREAM
mm
Why must the alarm go OFF so early?!
Yawn
KEEP HAVING THE SAME
click
ZZZ
RI-CHAN WENT TO HER ROOM AGAIN BY MISTAKE WHILE HE WAS STILL HALF-ASLEEP
I SEE FUYOU IS AS LOUD AS EVER
RIICHI IS MY YOUNGER BROTHER.
AHH
HHH
HHH

IT WASN'T A PROBLEM WHEN WE WERE KIDS, BUT UNFORTUNATELY THE SITUATION CHANGED
THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH US SLEEPING TOGETHER!
Idiot!
YOU'RE BEING TOO LOUD!
People will get the wrong idea!
kids these days
THE MOMENT
THEN QUIT GOING INTO MY ROOM HALF-SLEEP!
My ears are still ringing!
YOUR VOICE IS REALLY BAD FOR MY HEARING
oh, honestly
BUT WHY?
EVER SINCE WE WERE YOUNGER, RIICHI HAS HAD A HABIT OF GOING INTO MY BED
HEY, RIICHI, *
NO REASON
THAT RIICHI HAD BECOME A MAN
IT IS.
WHEN YOU DON'T GET HOME TILL AFTER MIDNIGHT,
I WONDER IF THAT'S THE TRUTH
IS IT REALLY BECAUSE OF BAND PRACTICE?
I REALIZED
WHY HAVE YOU BEEN SO GRUMPY LATELY, FUYOU? *

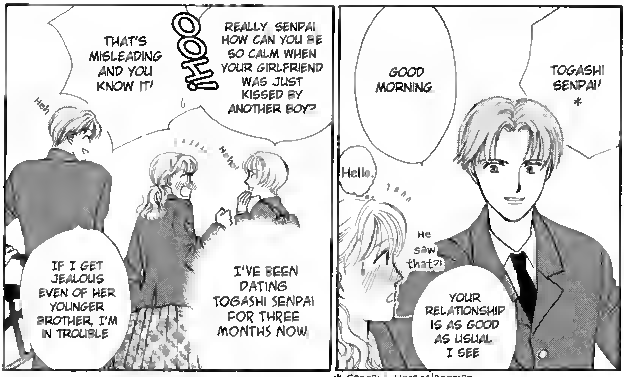
* The lack of honorifics when conversing with each other indicates a close relationship

GOOD MORNING, MIDORI
The smell also differs depending on the day
YOU'VE OCCASIONALLY COME HOME REEKING OF PERFUME
The day before yesterday's was Tresor *
GULP
A WOMAN SENSITIVE TO STUFF...
THANKS!!
YOU'RE LOOKING GREAT AGAIN TODAY, RIICHI-KUN!
GOOD MORNING, FUYOU!
I OFTEN ENCOUNTER DRUNK WOMEN ON THE LAST TRAIN...
* A brand of perfume.

!
GR
AB
RIICHI!
Ah!
I'VE TRIED LISTENING TO YAMAZAKI MASAYOSHI LIKE YOU SAID *
THAT'S RIGHT!
WAIT A MINUTE...
WHA...
HIS CDS? REALLY?!
Wow!
Yes!
Great!
WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?!
OH, LOOK!
?
OR AT LEAST LEAVE MY FRIENDS ALONE?
CAN'T YOU STICK TO HOOKING UP WITH YOUR OWN CLASSMATES?!
* A Japanese singer


Smooch!
YOU'RE SO CUTE, FUYOU. ♡
WHA...?

THE THINGS THAT I DON'T KNOW ABOUT HIM ARE GRADUALLY INCREASING
WHICH IS PROBABLY WHY I'VE BEEN HAVING THAT WEIRD DREAM
LATELY, RIICHI HAS BEEN SO COMPOSED AND ADULT-LIKE THAT I'VE FORGOTTEN THAT HE'S YOUNGER THAN ME.
YOU'RE SO BOLD EVEN THIS EARLY IN THE MORNING, ASAKAWA.
RIICHI!
You're so childish!
Damn, even his tongue is cute.
Slurp
THAT BOY HAS A BAD HABIT OF LOOKING GOOD NO MATTER WHAT, DOESN'T HE?
I've always thought so.

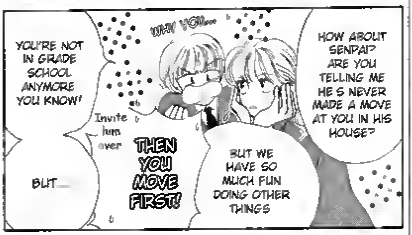

OOH!
REALLY SENPAI HOW CAN YOU BE SO CALM WHEN YOUR GIRLFRIEND WAS JUST KISSED BY ANOTHER BOY?
THAT'S MISLEADING AND YOU KNOW IT!
Hah
Hah
IF I GET JEALOUS EVEN OF HER YOUNGER BROTHER, I'M IN TROUBLE
I'VE BEEN DATING TOGASHI SENPAI FOR THREE MONTHS NOW
GOOD MORNING
TOGASHI SENPAI!
*
Hello
He saw that?!
YOUR RELATIONSHIP IS AS GOOD AS USUAL I SEE
* Senpai : Upperclassman

AND WE GET ALONG WELL HE'S PERFECT
....Ok
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE'VE DONE THAT
I'M FREE AFTER SCHOOL TODAY SO LET'S GO HOME TOGETHER
HE'S NICE

RICHI
HAS ONLY BEEN MY YOUNGER BROTHER FOR THE PAST EIGHT YEARS
I'LL WAIT FOR YOU IN THE USUAL PLACE THEN
BUT
THERE ARE THINGS THAT I STILL HAVEN'T SHARED WITH HIM

YOU STILL HAVEN'T KISSED?!
WHAT?!
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
Is that bad?
WHAT?

IN OTHER WORDS, WE'RE NOT RELATED BY BLOOD


YOU'RE NOT IN GRADE SCHOOL ANYMORE YOU KNOW!
BUT...
Invite him over
THEN YOU MOVE FIRST!
BUT WE HAVE SO MUCH FUN DOING OTHER THINGS
HOW ABOUT SENPAI? ARE YOU TELLING ME HE'S NEVER MADE A MOVE AT YOU IN HIS HOUSE?

SO THAT'S HOW IT IS WITH YOU TWO, HUH?
YEP!
I DON'T HAVE THE COURAGE YET TO DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT
THIS IS MY FIRST RELATIONSHIP WITH A BOY

AHH...
I see
SINCE RIICHI-KUN IS ALSO HOT,
YOU CAN'T DECIDE BETWEEN THEM
IT'S NOT LIKE THAT BETWEEN US!
MIDORI, WHAT DID I SEE YOU TALKING ABOUT WITH RIICHI EARLIER?
AAH THAT? IT'S A SECRET I PROMISED NOT TO TELL ANYONE
Could it be
THAT YOU TWO ARE DATING?
NO WAAAY! NEVER
YOU LEFT FOR CLASS SO QUICKLY AFTER SEEING HIM
THAT YOU HAD US WORRIED
I CAN STILL CLEARLY REMEMBER
THE DAY THAT RIICHI CAME ALONG
HERE IT IS, RIICHI-KUN.
IT HAPPENED
WHEN I WAS IN THIRD GRADE.
THIS IS FUYOU. SHE'LL BE YOUR OLDER SISTER FROM NOW ON.

HE LIVED WITH ONE RELATIVE AFTER ANOTHER UNTIL HE ENDED UP IN AN ORPHANAGE
HIS MOTHER DISAPPEARED WHEN HE WAS YOUNGER AND THEN HIS DAD PASSED AWAY LEAVING HIM ALL ALONE
HE BLUSHED WHENEVER HE SAW GIRLS.
HE WAS SO NERVOUS.
AND FATHER BEGAN TO FEEL THAT HE COULDN'T JUST LEAVE HIM THERE.
HE BEFRIENDED MY FATHER
YOU GUYS BETTER SHAPE UP!
BUT I WAS REALLY HAPPY TO GET A YOUNGER BROTHER.
MOTHER, IN THOSE DAYS, IT OBJECTED TO IT,
BEING SMALLER AND FAIRER-SKINNED THAN THE OTHER CHILDREN
RICHI WAS OFTEN BULLIED
SHUT UP, TOMBOY!
Put your money where your mouth is!
What's a girl gonna do?
THAT WAS MY YOUNGER BROTHER YOU WERE PICKING ON.

IT'S UP TO ME TO TAKE CARE OF HIM.
MY CUTE
YOUNGER BROTHER
IS GETTING BEATEN UP, I HAVE TO INTERFERE.
THAT TIME, WHENEVER I GOT HURT, I WOULD REPEATEDLY ANSWER BACK
FUYOU! YOUR FACE IS ALL BRUISED!
HOW DID YOU FIGHT BACK THAT TIME?
I JUST SLAP.
AS LONG AS RICHI
RICHI?
WHAT'S WRONG?
I WANTED TO PROTECT YOU.
She's not in the bathroom. Where could she be?
FUYOU ISN'T IN HER ROOM!
SH...
?
TANAFUMI-SAN!
chirp
chirp

THAT REMINDS ME
AH!
Asakawa is perverti
Haha
Haha
Heyo
Now on page 127...
VIKES
WHAT IS SO FUNNY THAT IS MAKING YOU LAUGH?
ASAKAWA!
Hehe
SINCE THAT TIME, THE AMOUNT OF STUFFED ANIMALS IN RIICHI'S ROOM HAS INCREASED
THE NUMBER OF KIDS PICKING ON HIM ONCE HE ENTERED MIDDLE SCHOOL BECAME SMALLER
Tsuzuki!
Gokuraku Tsuzuki
FUYOU, LOOK RIICHI-KUN IS OUTSIDE FOR GYM

EVERY DAY HE BECAME MORE BEAUTIFUL.
IT WAS LIKE WATCHING A BUTTERFLY EMERGE FROM ITS COCOON.
Hey! Over there!
BEFORE I KNEW IT, RIICHI HAD GROWN TALLER THAN ME
AND NO LONGER NEEDED ME TO PROTECT HIM ANYMORE
IT MADE ME FEEL REALLY LONELY

BECAUSE I FELT LIKE I WAS BEING LEFT BEHIND...
ART SUPPLY
HADA TALKED FOR TOO LONG
I'M MAKING TOGASHI SENPAI WAIT FOR ME
OH NO
SENPA...
BAM
!
WAH!
I THOUGHT IT WAS A TEACHER!
HUH..
THIS IS MY OLDER SISTER
WHA
No way!
WHO'S THIS?
RIICHI?!

SHE'S SO BEAUTIFUL...
.....
WELL, I'M GOING HOME
See ya!
HEY!
There's another person in there.
NO ONE ELSE IS SUPPOSED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS PLACE, THOUGH.
HAVE YOU SEEN TOGASHI SENPAI AROUND?
NOPE.
Oh
SHE'S A THIRD YEAR, RIGHT? WHY CAN'T YOU GET A GIRLFRIEND FROM YOUR OWN GRADE?
SHE JUST NEEDED MY HELP ON SOMETHING
REALLY?
YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SOMETHING ELSE?
WELL...
I GET IT! YOU'RE JEALOUS!
Hahal I see
YOU'RE WRONG!
What are you doing?
Let go!
GLOMP
ASAKAWA?
WHAT'S GOING ON?
WAH!
AH!

THAT HURT! WHAT WAS THAT FOR?
You Dummy!
I'M APOLOGIZING TO SENPAI HERE
I'M SO SORRY HE JUST...
IT'S OK
WAS FORCED TO WAIT WITH HER FOR YOUR
Idiot!
UM... JUST NOW THIS JERK...
OWW
RIICHI!
WAS TELLING THE TRUTH
Humph
I HAVE SOMETHING I WANT TO SAY
BEFORE YOU LEAVE,
You didn't have to say that!
WAIT!
SEE YA, FUYOU GO STRAIGHT HOME OK?

JUST LOOK AT YOU! ALWAYS ACTING LIKE SUCH A CHILD
A SPOILED CHILD WITH NOTHING BETTER TO DO THAN TO PICK A FIGHT
IS THAT ALL THAT YOU ARE?
BAM!
OH NO...
I'M SO SORRY ABOUT RIICHI...
WHY ARE YOU THE ONE APOLOGIZING, ASAKAWA?
BUT...
YOU'RE ALWAYS DOING THAT,
BUT SHOULD YOU REALLY BE THE ONE DOING SO?
I UNDERSTAND
BUT

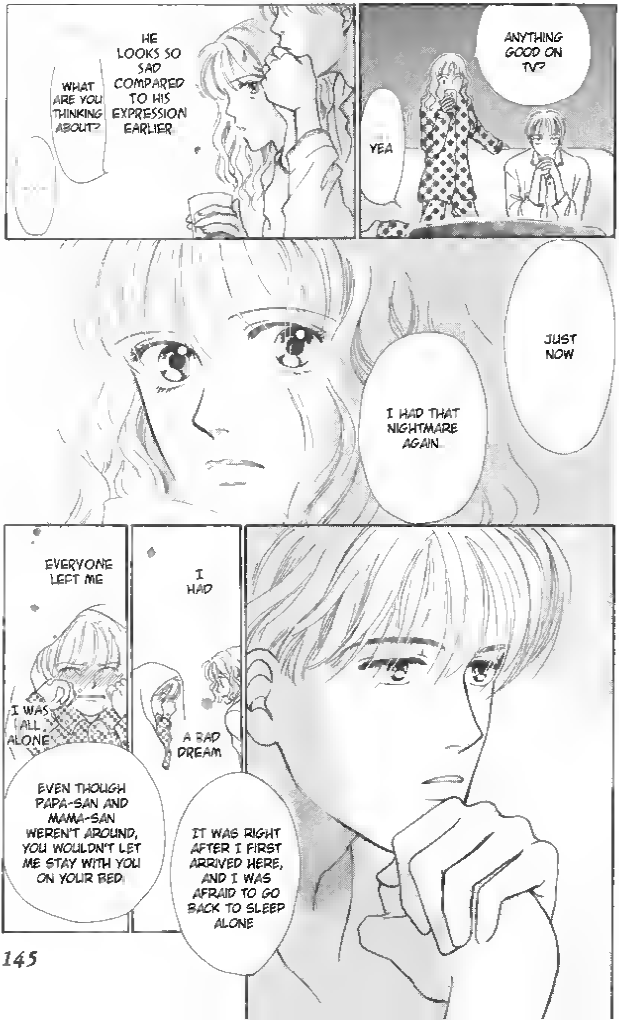
MAMA-SAN, YOU LEFT THE FLOWER POT OUTSIDE
Is that ok?
I'M HOME
M-CHAN
EVEN THOUGH HE SAYS THAT, "THERE'S ALWAYS TOMORROW,"
IT'S NOT SO EASY TO CHANGE
AH! FUYOU, I'M SORRY
THUMP
RIICHI?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
And why are you dressed like that?
WHAT? YOU FORGOT?
TODAY IS PAPA-SAN AND MAMA-SAN'S WEDDING ANNIVERSARY
HUH?
PLEASE BRING IT IN
I forgot about it
EVEN IF THAT'S THE CASE, WHY ARE YOU THE ONE COOKING?
I WAS TOO BUSY EATING SUSHI AT THE TIME.
MOM SAID IT WAS BETTER IF I DID IT INSTEAD OF YOU
HUH
OH, THAT'S RIGHT!
I TOTALLY FORGOT ABOUT IT
THEY SAID IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE THEY'VE HAD DINNER AT A HOTEL AND STAYED OVERNIGHT
THEY TOLD US ABOUT IT, REMEMBER?

I don't have to be a guy you know ♡
IF YOU CAN CHOOSE AGAIN BETWEEN HAVING A YOUNGER BROTHER OR SISTER, WHICH WOULD YOU GET?
I WAS JUST THINKING
IDIOT!
You are such a...
OW.
THUD
HE SEEMS TO BE
YOU KNOW
IN A GOOD MOOD
HM?
M-MAY I HELP?
WELL THEN MAKE SURE THE TOMATOES BOIL
After that cut the onions for the salad
I'm right now anyway
OKAY
SO HOW IS IT?
REALLY?
YOU BETTER EAT MORE OF THE RICE THAN THE BREAD
SO-SAI
NI WAY
IT'S DELICIOUS

IT'S JUST THAT YOU'RE SO GREAT.
YOU'RE ABLE TO PICK THINGS UP SO QUICKLY,
IT'S NOTHING
WHAT IS IT?
Hehe
AND COMPARED TO YOU
I DON'T THINK I'VE GROWN UP NEARLY AS MUCH...
I'm worse in every way
"Huh? Who am I kidding?
I WISH I HADN'T SAID ANYTHING
YOU KNOW FUYOU, IT'S OK FOR YOU TO MAKE MISTAKES SOMETIMES
OH, FORGET IT.
NOW THIS IS CRIT.
TIED TOGETHER WITH ONION SAUCE.
WHAT IS THIS?
FUYOU...
HM?
HOPELESSLY TACTLESS
slo
sh
IN FACT, IT'S WHEN YOU'RE NOT PERFECT THAT I LIKE YOU THE MOST

JUST NOW...
AH
Yea
You don't feel warm
ARE YOU COMING DOWN WITH A FEVER?
LOOK, JUST HURRY UP AND EAT!
OH, GEEZ
OH-KAY
DID HE HAVE ON HIS FACE?
Yea
You want Yea?
WHAT KIND OF EXPRESSION
SO EASILY...
BAM BAM
Tick
Tick
Tick
Tick
HE SAID "I LIKE YOU."

I CAN'T SLEEP...
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
I'VE BEEN IN BED FOR THE PAST TWO HOURS...
MAYBE SOME MILK WILL HELP
Yawn
I DO ALREADY?
Thump thump
WHAT'S THAT?
YOU'RE STILL UP?
Gasp!
YEA
DRINKING MILK DIDN'T HELP?
I HAVEN'T HAD ANY
Glug glug


WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT?
HE LOOKS SO SAD COMPARED TO HIS EXPRESSION EARLIER
ANYTHING GOOD ON TV?
YEA
JUST NOW
I HAD THAT NIGHTMARE AGAIN
EVERYONE LEFT ME
I WAS ALL ALONE
I HAD A BAD DREAM
EVEN THOUGH PAPA-SAN AND MAMA-SAN WEREN'T AROUND, YOU WOULDN'T LET ME STAY WITH YOU ON YOUR BED
IT WAS RIGHT AFTER I FIRST ARRIVED HERE, AND I WAS AFRAID TO GO BACK TO SLEEP ALONE

JUST THINK OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS GETS OUT.
THAT JERK
And don't lie. I know you're about to ask if you could sleep in my bed
Y-YOU PROBABLY THINK
THAT I'M STILL HALF-ASLEEP, BUT I'M NOT AND I WON'T LET YOU SLEEP WITH ME
YOU ALL JUST DECIDED TO GIVE UP ON ME.
HEY!
ACK!
CRAB
I'M GOING BACK TO BED
I BET EVEN THAT PITIFUL EXPRESSION IS WELL-CALCULATED
BA-BUMP
BA-BUMP
BA-BUMP
FUYOU...
HUH?
STARE
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! I'M NOT PLAYING AROUND WITH YOU!

STAY WITH ME UNTIL I FALL ASLEEP
I'M GOING TO SLEEP HERE TONIGHT
SINCE WHEN DID I START TO SERVE THE SAME FUNCTION AS LINUS' BLANKET? *
IT'S OK!
I FEEL SAFE WHEN I CAN SMELL YOU
HE REALLY TOOK ME BY SURPRISE
HONESTLY, THOUGH!
* A Peanuts character
I TRY MY BEST TO BE THERE
FOR MY FRIENDS
AFTER ALL, I'M LETTING YOU SLEEP WITH ME,
AREN'T I?

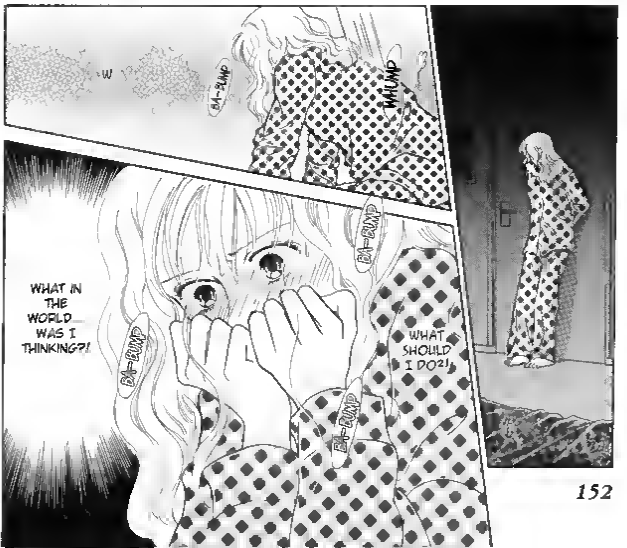
AFTER THAT, I OFTEN STAYED WITH HIM
YOUR DREAM WON'T BE SO SCARY IF WE'RE TOGETHER
SO DON'T WORRY
RICHI SEEMED TO HAVE LOST SOME OF HIS SADNESS
AND I THINK ONLY CRIED WHENEVER HE WAS ALONE
IT WAS RICHI WHO STAYED WITH ME
SIMILARLY, WHEN I WAS HAVING PROBLEMS WITH MY RELATIONSHIP WITH SENPAI DURING NEW YEAR'S EVE,

HE REFUSED TO LEAVE ME ALONE
UNTIL I FELT BETTER
rustle
AND EVEN WENT AS FAR AS TO CANCEL HIS OWN DATE.
Mm
...RICHI?
ARE YOU ASLEEP?

THE MORE SEPARATED I BECOME FROM RIICHI,
THE SADDER I FEEL.
WHY IS IT
BA-BUMP
I REALLY LIKE YOU.
THAT I HAVE NEVER SAID TH'S
TO ANYONE ELSE?
BA-BUMP
RIICHI

DID YOU SAY SOMETHING?
BAM
THUMP
!!
KA-CLICK
I'm sor-
BA-BUMP
BA-BUMP
IDIOT! I'M SUCH AN

BAM


BA-DUMP
BA-DUMP
BA-DUMP
BA-DUMP
BA-DUMP
WHAT IN THE WORLD— WAS I THINKING?!
WHAT SHOULD I DO?!

I'M SUCH AN IDIOT!
WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN IN THE MORNING?
chirp
chirp
WHAT KIND OF EXPRESSION WILL HE HAVE ON HIS FACE?!
KA-CLACK
GOOD MORNING
BA-BUMP
WE'RE OUT OF TOOTHPASTE
AH!
YEA
AH, I'm going in...
toothpaste
I'll go get more
NO REACTION...
MAYBE SINCE HE WAS HALF-ASLEEP HE'S NOT SURE WHETHER IF IT WAS REAL OR A DREAM...
You have your keys?
Yea

THAT'S RIGHT
RICHI HAS TO HAVE BEEN HALF-ASLEEP
Yup
Yup...
FUYOU,
IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG?
BA-
BUMP
!!
W...
WHAT?!
PAPA-SAN'S SANDALS
TAPA
!!
IT'S A JOKE! A JOKE!
AHH! WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?
!!
SWEAT
WELL, I'M GOING AHEAD
YOU'RE PLANNING ON GOING OUT WITH THOSE SHOES ON?
SO,
OF COURSE NOT!
click
FUYOU,

YOU PICKED THE WRONG PAIR
CLICK
JUST NOW.
WHAT EXACTLY DID MY "LITTLE BROTHER" MEAN BY THAT?

RIICHI SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN AVOIDING ME
what's going on?
Isn't it rare for things to be this far?
SINCE THAT TIME,
click
EVEN THOUGH WE'RE NOT TIED TOGETHER BY BLOOD
HAVE YOU TWO BEEN FIGHTING RECENTLY?
You never go to school together anymore
R-chan always comes first
I GUESS AN "OLDER SISTER"
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. I JUST HAVEN'T BEEN FEELING WELL.
DOES THIS MEAN
JUST CAN'T BE SEEN AS A WOMAN, HUH?

HAD I JUST BEEN... REJECTED?!

THAT MY FEELINGS FOR RIICHI ARE WRONG?
ASAKAWA, YOU KNOW YOUR FACE
ALWAYS GIVES AWAY YOUR FEELINGS
WHAT BROUGHT THIS ON!?
Haha
Shock
RECENTLY YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING ILL AT EASE
IT'S NOT THAT I REALLY MIND
BUT IS IT BECAUSE OF WHAT'S GOING ON BETWEEN RIICHI-KUN AND YOU?
BA-DUMP
THAT'S IT, ISN'T IT?
Ahahaha
IT'S JUST ANOTHER ONE OF OUR USUAL FIGHTS
I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND HIM
IT'S SO ANNOYING
BUT REALLY, IT'S NOTHING MORE THAN A TYPICAL FIGHT BETWEEN SI

BLINGS
I'M SUCH AN IDIOT
SO IT IS TRUE THAT YOU TWO
BA-BUMP
AREN'T RELATED BY BLOOD
HUH?
WHY AM I CRYING?
SNIFF
IT'S JUST LIKE I THOUGHT THEN
TOGASHI SENPAI!
WHAT... WHAT EVER GAVE YOU THAT IDEA?
WHEN I FIRST STARTED GOING OUT WITH YOU,
RIICHI-KUN ACTED REALLY BELLIGERENTLY TOWARDS ME
"HEY, YOU! AREN'T YOU TOGASHI?"

REMEMBER THAT..
IF YOU EVER HURT FUYOU
I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU THAT I WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU
SINCE WE'RE NOT ACTUALLY BLOOD-RELATED
IT'S OK
DON'T YOU THINK IT'S STRANGE
TO BE SO ATTACHED TO HIS SISTER?
FOR A BROTHER
BUT HE KEPT ON HARASSING ME ABOUT IT AFTER THAT.
AND BESIDES
I THOUGHT HE WAS JOKING AT FIRST
DUMBASS!
SO THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH US LIKING EACH OTHER THAT WAY,
I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS IMPORTANT
AS LONG AS YOU NEVER MENTIONED THAT YOU FELT THAT SAME WAY

HOWEVER, I FINALLY UNDERSTOOD WHAT HE MEANT WHEN I SAW YOU TWO TOGETHER.
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR YOU TO EVER FEEL THAT WAY ABOUT ME
I'D ALWAYS FEEL LIKE THE THIRD WHEEL IN OUR RELATION-SHIP
BECAUSE IT WAS SO NATURAL FOR YOU TO ACT THAT WAY AROUND EACH OTHER EVEN WHEN YOU HAD A BOYFRIEND
BEING THE OLDER ONE, I'M GOING TO HAVE TO BE MATURE ABOUT THIS AND ACCEPT THE INEVITABLE
SENPAI
IT'S OBVIOUS
THAT YOU FEEL THE SAME WAY HE DOES
IS THAT REALLY TRUE?
I'M HOME
WELCOME BACK
SOMEONE CAME.
BUT
IF THAT'S THE CASE,
THEN WHY
IS RICHI AVOIDING ME?

KA-CLACK
ARE YOU IN?
HE'S NOT HERE...
OH...
BAM BAM
BAM
RICHI?
PROBABLY STILL IN THE TOILET...
?
MARKED?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING
IN MY ROOM?
A LISTING OF PLACES FOR RENT?
WHY IS THIS

IT'S A HOBBY OF MINE
ANSWER ME SERIOUSLY!
WHAT?
WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?
WHY ARE YOU READING THIS SORT OF THING?
IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE RIGHT AWAY
BUT I'M THINKING OF BECOMING MORE INDEPENDENT
BUT YOU DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY! DO YOU HONESTLY THINK THAT IT'D BE EASY?
SO I'VE BEEN WORKING PART-TIME ON THOSE NIGHTS I TOLD YOU I HAD BAND PRACTICE
I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO WORRY,
!!
YOU'RE LEAVING HOME?!
I SAID NOT RIGHT AWAY, DIDN'T I?
I meant someday

I'M COMING!
Ri-chan!
AREN'T YOU EATING?
I MADE HER PROMISE NOT TO TELL YOU ABOUT IT
AFTER SHE ACCIDENTALLY SAW ME WORKING
I EVEN MADE MIDORI-SAN KEEP IT A SECRET
I'VE... JUST BROKEN UP WITH SENPAI
ALTHOUGH IT'S NOT AS IF I HAVEN'T FIGURED THAT OUT BY THE WAY YOU'VE BEEN ACTING
Haha
BUT IT SEEMS TO ME THAT HE'S WAY OFF
HE TOLD ME
THAT YOU HAD FEELINGS FOR ME,
DON'T YOU LIKE ME ANYMORE?
BUT WHAT I WANT TO KNOW IS WHY? WHY ARE YOU NO LONGER TALKING TO ME?!

N-NOBODY'S SAYING THAT!
!!
IS IT BECAUSE I'VE COME TO LOVE YOU IN A WAY THAT NO OLDER SISTER SHOULD LOVE HER YOUNGER BROTHER?
JUST BECAUSE MY FEELINGS FOR YOU ARE WRONG, YOU FEEL THAT YOU CAN NO LONGER TALK TO ME?
THEN WHY HAVE YOU BEEN AVOIDING ME?!
BECAUSE
T-
THERE ARE A LOT OF REASONS
WHAT ARE THEY?
COME ON! TELL ME!
flush
STOP IT!
AHH!
RIICHI!

I'M SCARED
I GUESS THAT WAS A BIT MUCH
AH
SORRY...
FUYOU?
!
AD
TS
WOOSH
IT'S ALL BECAUSE YOU KEPT IGNORING THE OBVIOUS!
THINGS HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT BETWEEN US FOR A LONG TIME, FUYOU
I'M NO LONGER THAT LITTLE KID THAT NEEDS YOUR HELP ALL THE TIME!

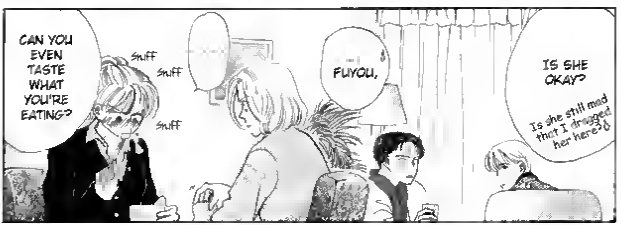
FU...
TO STILL BEING UNABLE TO SLEEP AFTER A BAD DREAM?!
YOU STUPID BRAT!
WHO IS THE ONE THAT ADMITTED
IT'S ONLY YOUR BODY THAT HAS GROWN UP!
AH!
IT'S NOTHING I...
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FACE?!
RI-CHAN!
FUYOU?!
I could hear you all the way downstairs...
WHAT'S GOING ON WITH YOU TWO?
Hey now...!?
BAM
...CAN END UP IN THE NORTH OR SOUTH POLE FOR ALL I CARE!
WAAHHH
RICHI, YOU JERK!
I HURT HER FEELINGS...
!!
WAHHHH
FUYOU!?
WAAAHHHHH

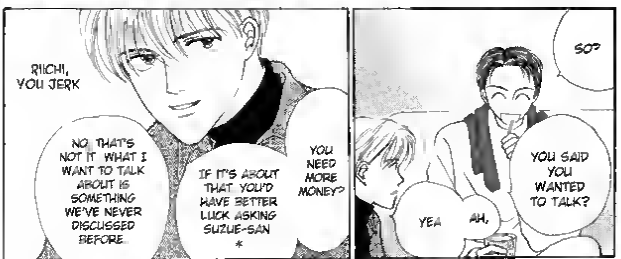
WAAHHH
MY DREAM BECAME TRUE
FUYOU! STOP ACTING LIKE THAT!
RI-CHAN, GO EAT SOMETHING
SHE'S LOCKED HERSELF IN
SIGH
SO FROM NOW ON I'LL STOP WORRYING ABOUT HIM
RIICHI SAID HE DIDN'T NEED ME
ANYMORE
IT'S NO GOOD
WHENEVER FUYOU USED TO COME HOME INJURED
IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'VE SEEN THAT EXPRESSION ON YOUR FACE
HURT
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
HM?
YOU'D ALWAYS HAVE THAT PITIFUL LOOK ON YOUR FACE

* Fuyou means lotus in Japanese. These grow in mud showing that beauty can emerge even from things that are not so beautiful
THERE WAS A PERIOD OF TIME WHEN FUYOU FELT THAT SHE COULDN'T LIVE UP TO HER NAMESAKE
AFTER ALL, SOMEONE NAMED AFTER A FLOWER LIKE FUYOU HAD BE BEAUTIFUL *
IT BRINGS TO MIND SOMEONE WHO'S NATURALLY GRACEFUL, RIGHT?
THE IDEA HAUNTED HER EVEN WHEN SHE WAS LITTLE
BUT THANKS TO YOU,
EVEN IF SHE DIDN'T END UP BEING THAT GRACEFUL VISION I THINK SHE STILL BLOSSOMED INTO SOMETHING EQUALLY GOOD
Hehe~ It's all because your parents were dumb to name her that in the first place huh?
M-MAMA-SAN!
WHAAAT?
So sudden I don't scare me like that
GO ON
LISTEN TO ME FOR A MINUTE.
DON'T YOU THINK
THAT WANTING TO BE EVEN HAPPIER THAN YOU ALREADY ARE IS WRONG?

I DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND WHY YOU FIND THIS TO BE A PROBLEM.
BUT HOW HAPPY YOU WANT TO BE IS REALLY UP TO YOU TO DECIDE
FORGET IT
Ugh
SORRY ABOUT THAT
Ahahaha
I GUESS YOU'RE AT THAT AGE WHERE YOU THINK ABOUT THAT SORT OF THING
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU KIDS?
AHAHA!
!!
Hehe
RI-CHAN?
YEA.
What's wrong? Are you listening?
EVEN IF OTHERS THINK IT'S WRONG...
IT DOESN'T MATTER
THERE WILL ALWAYS BE SOMEONE ELSE AROUND YOU WHO WILL UNDERSTAND DON'T YOU THINK?
PAPA-SAN'S COMING HOME EARLY TONIGHT RIGHT?
HM — THAT'S RIGHT
It's almost time for him to be back

I'M NOT GOING TO LEAVE THE HOUSE TONIGHT
Why Oh?
THERE'S SOMETHING IMPORTANT
THAT I WANT TO DISCUSS WITH BOTH OF YOU
DESPITE MY SAD SITUATION, MY HUNGER STILL MAKES ITSELF KNOWN
Stuff
SOMEHOW IT MAKES ME LOOK EVEN MORE PITIFUL...
BAM
FUYOU, ARE YOU GOING TO COME OUT?
GRoooooow
I WANT TO APOLOGIZE FOR WHAT I SAID EARLIER.
Hmph
YOU'RE HUNGRY RIGHT?
I'LL LEAVE IF YOU PROMISE TO GO EAT
HMPH!
IT'S NOT LIKE I WANT TO SEE YOUR FACE,
Thud Thud Thud
Thud
ka clack
BAM
Silence
Eff




RIICHI, YOU JERK
NO. THAT'S NOT IT. WHAT I WANT TO TALK ABOUT IS SOMETHING WE'VE NEVER DISCUSSED BEFORE.
IF IT'S ABOUT THAT, YOU'D HAVE BETTER LUCK ASKING SUZUE-SAN *
YOU NEED MORE MONEY?
SO?
YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO TALK?
AH,
YEA

* Suzue-san = Mama-san

AND MAMA-SAN,
PAPA-SAN
YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO CHARM THEM SO THAT THEY'LL SUPPORT YOU ON YOUR PLAN TO LIVE ALONE.
HOW SNEAKY.
GIVE FUYOU TO ME.
PLEASE
FEELS THE SAME WAY I DO
BA-DUMP
I WAS BEING SERIOUS!
T-THAT'S REALLY FUNNY, RIICHI!
SHE
I SAID I WANT THE TWO OF US TO HAVE A FUTURE TOGETHER.
What's the punch line?

IS THAT TRUE FUYOU?
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU...
CLUNK
WHAT?
DON'T YOU THINK THAT WAS A LITTLE TOO SUDDEN?
I thought Papa-san was going to pass out.
BUT THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT HE DIDN'T, RIGHT?
Here
YOU DID MAKE A HABIT OF AVOIDING ME...

I THOUGHT THAT IF I WERE INDEPENDENT, THEN YOU WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO FIND OUT ABOUT MY NON-BROTHERLY FEELINGS TOWARD YOU...
BUT RECENTLY, THANKS TO MAMA-SAN'S WORDS,
BECAUSE I THOUGHT THAT IT WAS WRONG OF ME TO LOVE YOU THAT WAY
AS LONG AS WE LIVED TOGETHER, I CONSTANTLY HAD TO KEEP MY FEELINGS IN CHECK
BECAUSE IT SEEMED AS IF ALL COMMON SENSE LEFT YOU THE MOMENT I SAID I LIKED YOU TOO
BELIEVE ME I WAS JUST AS SURPRISED,
You looked like you were going to try to attack me in my sleep
Is that so?
WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO LIVE BY YOURSELF IN THE FIRST PLACE?
I STOPPED BEING SCARED
I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT NOT HAVING EVERYTHING YOU WANTED IS PART OF BEING HUMAN
I ALREADY GOT YOU AND TWO WONDERFUL PARENTS
SO I WAS SCARED THAT IF I DARED TO BE EVEN HAPPIER THAN I ALREADY AM, I MIGHT LOSE EVERYTHING AGAIN
DUMMY... THAT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN
?

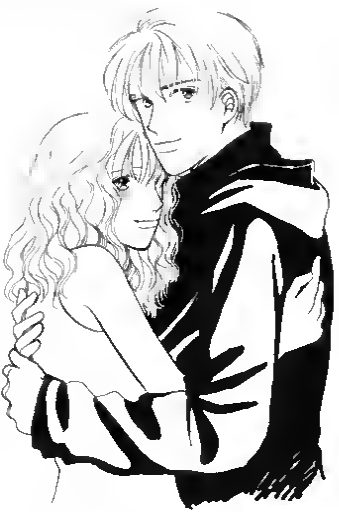
YEA...
RUSH
Can't catch me!
Ohhohoho!
RIICHI !!
WHAT IS IT?
HEHE....
NOW THAT WE'RE NO LONGER JUST SIBLINGS...
GRAB
WHAT?
!!
SMOOCH
I THINK THAT CHILDREN IN GENERAL WISH TO BE HAPPY.
BUT IT SEEMS THAT UP TILL NOW, RIICHI HADN'T DARED TO HOPE FOR IT HIMSELF.

YOU HAVE TO BE TRULY HAPPY FROM NOW ON,
SO DO YOUR BEST
Pat
Pat
DURING THAT TIME, I SAW RIICHI CRY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS,
BUT
FUYOU?
What's wrong?
WERE DIFFERENT FROM WHEN HE WAS YOUNGER
THE TEARS HE SHED THEN
ABSOLUTELY NOTHING
I WILL TRY
MY BEST TO MAKE YOU HAPPY,

STUDENTS SHOULDN'T BE SO CONCEITED!
SECRETARY
IT'S NOT GOOD TO BE SO STUBBORN, SO JUST LET ME DO THIS
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT
AH! YOU'RE SO ANNOYING!
DIDN'T I TELL YOU I'LL PAY FOR IT?!
SO LET'S STAY TOGETHER FOR A LONG TIME, OK?
2 YEARS LATER
* 2,000 Yen = $18 (US)
AH!
THAT WILL BE 2000 YEN *
Mmm! I didn't see that coming!
IF you skim you'll see it happened before
AH!
UM, CAN YOU PLEASE PAY
HUH?
I KNOW YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO EAT ON THE ROOF,
HEY!
I'M SORE! HOW MANY MORE FLOORS DO I HAVE TO GO?
What are you talking about?
THIS LITTLE BIT OF EXERCISE IS GOING TO MAKE THE FOOD TASTE EVEN BETTER!
HUFF
HUFF
BUT I CAN'T KEEP CLIMBING UP THESE STEPS ANYMORE

DAMNED BRAT!
OH! ARE YOU GETTING TOO OLD FOR THIS, FUYOU?
Why you...
Should I start calling you ma'am?
IT OPENED AGAIN
OWW
OWW
NOW I HAVE TO TAKE MY SHOE OFF
I FORGOT ABOUT MY BLISTER
HEY!
RIICHI!
J-JUST A LITTLE BIT MORE
BA-BUMP
THAT DREAM
BA-BUMP
JUST LIKE
SHE
ONCE
THIS LOOKS
BA-BUMP
BA-BUMP

I KNOW HOW THIS ONE ENDS
EXCEPT
Huff
Huff
Huff
HEY.
ONCE I REACH THE HIGHEST FLOOR,
I'LL BE WRAPPED UP IN HIS EMBRACE.
《THE END》



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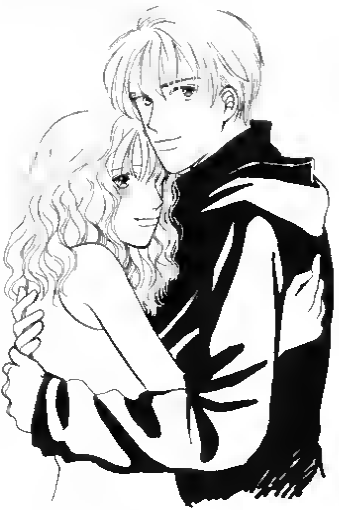
Embrace Me Tightly On The Highest Floor

Hugs & Kisses



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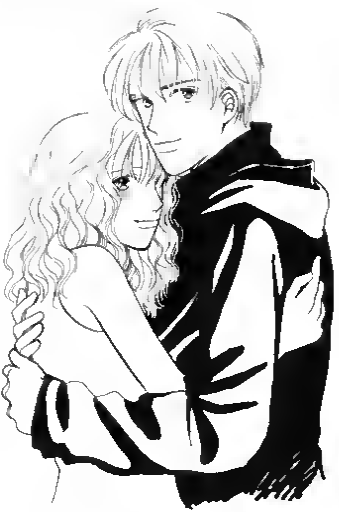

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